

A Cupid in Corduroy

(Continued from page 9.)

her hair in pigtails an' a flowery wrapper on, she let out a little squeal o' joy an' runs up ter me.

"My, but I'm glad ter see yer, Ben! I was sure you was lost, an' Captain Fitz-Jones was goin' ter start right off after breakfast ter hunt for yer."

"He was, was he," says I. "Will I've had a dandy lark lookin' for him all night."

"You poor dear old thing. Why soon's he'd shot his b'ar an' skinned it he come back an' led us home, sayin' you'd follow 'fore long. I hope yer didn't catch yer death o' cold."

"Nothin' but a crab," says I, tryin' my derndest ter crack a grin.

Well, sir, it took me three solid days ter git up spunk enough to try again, but if I didn't I seen poor Sylvaia would be lost in spite of herself. Jones was gittin' more bold every minute an' the old folks was eggin' him on as if they were 'feared he'd still get away on 'em. It was the sight o' the b'ar skin that the soldier had shot that told me how ter go to work.

Yer don't want ter ever personate a critter when there's guns about—it's too risky. So first I had ter fix things so that this bloodthirsty sport wouldn't butt in a second time. The only way I could do it was ter appeal direct to his sense o' modesty—the one weak spot he seemed ter have in his thick hide. Why he was so timid about bein' seen in a disabillly state that he'd walk half a mile from the tents to take his mornin' plunge an' then I'll be hanged if he didn't wear a bathin' suit. As luck would have it he'd left all his fine git-ups at Plaster Rock and brought only his huntin' togs into the woods. These he'd hang up by the fire when he'd turn in, an' I once warned him that accidents might happen.

Well, one happened that very night, an' next mornin' we woke up ter find nothin' left of his pants but the buttons an' the seat.

"It wouldn't be so bad if it weren't jest the sort o' day that the fish will be bitin' like mad," I says, sadly, at the door of the tent.

The soldier stopped his mutterin' an' says maybe I could loan a pair from whoever it is is campin' on Button Island.

"I'll do my best," says I, an' paddles across.

Pottle wouldn't take no notice of me 'til I told him what I was doin' an' the trouble poor Jones was in. Then he grinned a bit an' says to tell his honesty that he's awful sorry but he ain't got but one suit an' he'll be needin' that himself.

So I goes back an' explains, an' then pullin' Miss Spraggs aside, winks an' tells her that there's a fish bigger'n those Jones had been tellin' of waitin' to be hooked at the foot o' the lake an' wouldn't she come an' try her luck. But somehow she had a hankerin' for home-life that day, an' I finally had ter hint about the sport's state of undress makin' him nervous o' havin' folks about afore she'd change her mind an' agree ter come.

Maria also thought she'd better slip off, but Josiah stayed back ter cheer up his guest an' help him invent a new kind o' garment out of a night-shirt. The three of us an' the fishin' tackle then paddled down to the outlet an' Sylvaia got busy with the flies. She hooked a couple o' grilse an' it got her an' her ma so excited that I knew I could sneak off without bein' missed.

Soon's I was out o' sight I made a short cut through the woods, an' it weren't long before I was back ter the camp. Then I went down on my knees an' crawled up to where the skin was dryin' in the sun, pulled it free an' ducks back ter cover without seein' a sign o' the two men, though I could hear them pow-wowin' in the tent.

"Things are bound ter come out right this time," says I to myself, "provided that fool Pottle don't git all muddled up."

When I'd returned to the women I lay down in the brakes an' waited 'til it was time ter act, which must have been a good hour later. But finally I seen a figure in grey comin' through

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